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# **County Board discusses plans to implement improvements to permitting process**

## ***Review of various County departments designed to streamline services and create customer-friendly environment***

An exhaustive six-month review of the County's permitting and development review processes produced a comprehensive report on the system as a whole and offered recommendations to streamline the process and create a more customer-friendly environment. At its monthly Committee of the Whole meeting, the County Board met with Paul Zucker, who conducted the review and authored the report, to discuss his findings and plan for the implementation of the report's suggested improvements.

Zucker Systems collected information about the County's permitting process from all affected parties. Focus groups, customer surveys, interviews of customers and staff, observation of staff work and review of various documents and paperwork were used to collect data.

"We recognize that the County's permitting process can be cumbersome and somewhat overwhelming for businesses and especially for residents," said Lake County Board Chairman Suzi Schmidt. "We are proactively identifying the areas that need to be improved, which is why we sought a variety of input from businesses, customers who receive permits and County staff."

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## County Board discusses results of permitting study – 2 of 2

The study involved all County Departments involved in the permitting and development review processes. The Health Department's Environmental Health Division, the Department of Planning, Building and Development, Public Works, Stormwater Management Commission and the Division of Transportation are the County agencies most directly affected.

The authors of the study complimented the competency and morale of County employees and cited the County's "generally sophisticated regulations and procedures" as strengths on which to build. According to the study, staff resources are adequate in most departments involved in the process, yet coordination among departments remains an issue.

"No one issue pervades Lake County's permitting process more than the lack of a clear integrated approach to permitting," County Administrator Barry Burton said. "Customers should not have to hit a moving target in order to receive a permit from the County."

Overall, the report identified 197 recommendations and opportunities for improvement. The report designates 46 of the recommendations as top priorities and suggests that costs of implementation will be absorbed through greater efficiency. Recommendations were further broken-down into categories of "quick fix," "time saver" and "internal" to help County officials establish a viable implementation plan.

Recommendations on issues impacting all areas of the permitting and development review processes focus primarily on technology improvements, streamlining forms and processes, creating checklists for customers, finding better ways of communicating with customers and improving coordination among County departments and staff.

The County is also reviewing and planning to implement numerous recommendations for individual departments involved in the permitting and development review processes. The next step for County officials is to create implementation plans for larger changes and to immediately implement "quick fix" items.